

Make Every Effort to Add to Your Faith (*Part 3*)

2 Peter 1:8-9

Thought for the Day: Regardless of what the New Year brings, for good or ill, 2021 can be a year of positive spiritual growth (becoming more like the Lord Jesus Christ in our character and conduct), if we continually remind ourselves that Christ died on the cross to cleanse us from our sins.

There are two important ways we can motive ourselves to grow in our Christian life: 1) By remembering, reflecting, and living in the light of Christ's sacrifice on the cross; and 2) By remembering, reflecting, and living in the light of Christ's soon Return. Jesus is coming soon to bring to completion the work of salvation which He began for us on the cross. That realization should continually motivate us to pursue spiritual growth in our lives.

In 2 Peter 1:3-11, Peter is explaining to us how to grow in Christlike character and why it is so important to do so. Just as a physically healthy baby will grow and mature physically, so a spiritually healthy Christian will grow and mature spiritually. If we are not growing, it is cause for some serious reflection on our part.

How committed are you to spiritual growth in this coming year? It's a choice, not an accident! What is your plan for spiritual growth? In what areas of your character and conduct do you want to grow and become more like the Lord Jesus Christ?

8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing...

- God expects us to grow! The true knowledge of Christ (vss. 2-3), will produce Christlike character in the believer (vss. 5-7).
- We grow in these seven qualities by putting them into practice.
- "A farmer once said to his helper who always filled the buckets of grain only three fourths full when they should have been full, 'the buckets are never full until they are running over.' So a Christian is never filled with the Spirit and spiritual blessings until his life is running over with the good things of God, refreshing the lives of others." (*Kenneth Wuest, II Peter, p. 26*)
- "There is no excuse for resting content with present attainment. Lack of spiritual growth is a sign of spiritual death. Nor is there any room for indolence and the slackening of effort...; otherwise the Christian becomes like the wheat choked by weeds (the cares of this world, the pursuit of riches, and indulgence in the pleasures of life) which produces no fruit..." (*Michael Green, Second Peter, pp. 71-72*)

...they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

- "The more we become like Jesus Christ, the more the Spirit can use us in witness and service. The believer who is not growing is [ineffective and unfruitful.] His knowledge of Jesus Christ is producing nothing practical in his life. . .Some of the most effective Christians I have known are people without dramatic talents and special abilities, or even exciting personalities, yet God has used them in marvelous ways. Why? Because they are becoming more and more like Jesus Christ. They have the kind of character and conduct that God can trust with blessing. They are fruitful because they are faithful; they are

effective because they are growing in their Christian experience." (*Wiersbe, Be Alert, p. 27*)

- Ineffective = to be useless. Literally, to be unemployed, out of work. The person who is not growing in Christlike character is of no use to the Lord in the work of His kingdom. He's effectively, spiritually unemployed!
- Unfruitful = to be barren and unproductive. In the parable of the soils, Jesus describes the seed that falls among thorns and is choked. And He explains, "This is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, the desire for other things, and the pleasures of life choke the word, and it proves unfruitful." (Mark 4:18; Luke 8:14)
- The reason we are not growing in our Christian life is because we are more concerned about and committed to the things of this world. We love the world more than we love God! (1 John 2:15-17)
- "Salvation does not depend on positive character qualities and good works; rather, it produces those qualities and works. A person who claims to be saved while remaining unchanged does not understand faith or what God has done for him or her. Faith in and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ that leads to growth in these qualities causes believers to make a difference in their world and persevere to the end." (*The Life Application Commentary Series*)

9 For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.

- The believer who is not growing is not seeing the world clearly! He is so focused on the physical, material things of this world that he cannot see the spiritual realities of God's kingdom.
- The word translated "nearsighted" can also mean "to shut the eyes."
 - Peter may be saying here that they deliberately shut their eyes to the things of God, thus causing spiritual blindness.
 - When we set our affections on the things of this world, we are deliberately forgetting what Christ has done for us on the cross.
 - "...the man has deliberately forgotten, put out of his mind, the fact that he has been *purged from his old sins.*" (*Green, Second Peter, p. 73*)
 - They "deliberately put out of their mind all that Christ had done in erasing the sins they committed before they were saved." They refuse to break with their old, sinful lifestyle. (*Life Application Commentary Series*)
- "A professing Christian who is missing the virtues mentioned above (vss. 5-7) is unable to discern his or her true spiritual condition and thus can have no assurance of his or her salvation." (*MacArthur, 1 & 2 Peter, p. 71*)

If you are not planning to grow, you are planning to fall! (vs. 10)